

## **INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

INTERVIEWEE: Andy Petefish, Rock Climber/ Mountain Climber

DATE OF INTERVIEW: June 19, 1991

PLACE: Devil's Tower, home of Ogden Driscoll

INTERVIEWER: Mark Junge

TRANSCRIPTION BY: Sue Keefe

DATE OF TRANSCRIPTION: September 1994

AP: My name is Andy Petefish.

MJ: OK... Let me put something on the front of this. Today is the 19th of June 1991, and my name is Mark Junge I'm talking with Andy Petefish here at Devil's Tower in Northeastern Wyoming and we're in the home of Ogden Driscoll. Right? In the kitchen...I guess or is this the living room or dining room--I don't know. It's a part of the dining room I guess and Andy is a mountain climber--right is that correct?

AP: Yeah, mountain climber slash rock climber.

MJ: OK... is the correct term mountain climber or rock climber?

AP: Well here at Devil's Tower it would probably be more appropriate to say rock climber its not really a mountain.

MJ: When and where were you born-- what date and where?

AP: I was born 1960, June 3rd in Monticello, Utah.

MJ: Who were your parents?

AP: Charles and Joan Petefish.

MJ: What does your father do? Are they still alive?

AP: Yeah, both my parents are still alive, my father is a salesman and Mom is an administrative officer in a supply business. In Grand Junction, Colorado. They're in the barber and beauty supply business.

MJ: How did you get into Wyoming? Were you raised in Grand Junction?

AP: Yeah, I was raised in Grand Junction and I just worked for the park service off and on and I applied at Devil's Tower because I wanted to be able to work somewhere and climb all the time and Devil's Tower is about the best place you can do that.

MJ: But you were raised in Grand Junction and went to school there? Were did you go to school?

AP: I went through High school in Grand Junction and then I went to college there briefly and then I went to Colorado School of Mines in Golden.

MJ: You went to Mesa for awhile.

AP: Yeah.

MJ: Was that a four year school then, when you went?

AP: In some disciplines it was a four year school. Same as it is now -- it is a state college but some programs, they don't offer an actual bachelor's.

MJ: What about the School of Mines? You go there for engineering normally.

AP: Yeah, I'm a geophysicist.

MJ: Oh, you are! Your masters, your bachelor's or what?

AP: My bachelor's -- a BS in physical engineering.

MJ: When did you graduate?

AP: Officially, 1989.

MJ: You mean you should have graduated earlier?

AP: I was in school and the last semester I was in school I had to take a program that wasn't in my discipline or my field to graduate and I just needed to fill my geology hours; then I got a free trip to Nepal and to go there, so I left to do that and then started climbing pretty much full time and didn't get back to school. I just finished the degree when I had extra time in the winters.

MJ: What kind of kid were you growing up Andy--an outdoors kid or what?

AP: Oh yeah -- I pretty much spent all my time outdoors.

MJ: What are your best early memories growing up?

AP: Oh, cross country skiing and mountaineering, rock climbing, bicycling...

MJ: Did your Dad do this?

AP: No, he wasn't into it. He's not really into it. He's sort of outdoorsy, but he's more the RV camper type.

MJ: How did you get into it?

AP: I started climbing trees when I was a little kid and just got fascinated with rappelling and that whole system of being safe while you're in the vertical environment and we have so many rocks where I come from and things to climb and we just started climbing them all the time.

MJ: Like the Palisades?

AP: UM...no we were in..the area where I lived was in the Colorado National Monument and the Black Canyon and the desert canyon lands area.

MJ: You know I gotta ask you. This has been on my mind ever since I thought about interviewing anybody who climbed. Did you have any fear of falling?

AP: Oh yeah. The first time I was climbing I was horrified of heights. It took me quite a while to get used to it, but that is one of the great lessons of climbing is to experiment with your fears and learn how to deal with them if there is any thing that is a great lesson in climbing as far as being translated to everyday life it teaches you a mechanism by which to deal with your fears whether it is failing with your job or if your failing with your relationships or... it teaches your to try something for... and that realizing that you can try and fail and still try again and keep on going if you do it in the right way.

MJ: Most people especially as kids it seems to me would be the opposite they would say... if they were afraid of heights they'd say that's it I'm never going to get on top of this thing again.

AP: Well that very same thing happened to me this weekend. I had some climbing lessons and there was about five or six people who showed up to take and then it was kind a spur of the moment kind of deal with a group of young boys and there was five I guess five kids that came to try to climb they said they wanted to or something and as it turned out all of them were afraid essentially to try except for one, but not only were they afraid to try it they were so afraid that they wouldn't even entertain the thought of trying, they just automatically shut it out of their minds before they even went out and tied into the rope or learned how to tie into the rope or got 2 or 3 feet off the ground they just gave up so they obviously don't... they need to work on this problem they have of being so afraid of something they don't have anything else better to do in my mind so they need to ya know... I could tell just by the way they were that they were afraid ya know the fear of failing in front of their buddies basically was the main thing I sensed.

MJ: Could you have taken them out individually perhaps?

AP: Oh yeah if I could have gone out one on one with every one of them it probably would not have been a big problem whether they would have had the motivation is another story.

MJ: Why did you have the motivation I mean why didn't you after that first climb or that first fear of height, say that's it. I mean, you obviously didn't go that route.

AP: Well, I experimented with it, you know I didn't make it up the first time I tried. I just thought it was interesting, pushing yourself to that limit and then working on that and it wasn't the end of the world when I fell. What did I lose? It was just gaining information and knowledge about myself. Hey, I am afraid of heights and maybe I can work that out sometime.

MJ: Do you find out if you're a courageous person or not?

AP: If you climb? Um, I suppose indirectly you find out if you're courageous or not. Really being courageous and climbing you find that you are faced with an obstacle that you have to deal with, but in climbing that is not necessarily always the case. You take calculated risks, like having the courage to go ahead and commit to something or you may or may not live. I don't know if courage is really the right word for that but I suppose you might be able to decide if you are courageous or not. I think it's more a matter of knowing your own limitations and how well you know yourself physically and mentally. Even in climbing it comes down to being spiritually aware of yourself. That's why it's such a great activity. It's just a combination of all three of those aspects of being human that it makes a wonderful, fantastic activity.

MJ: All three? Which three?

AP: Physical, mental and spiritual aspects of being human.

MJ: There really is something spiritual about it?

AP: Oh, yeah, there's no doubt about it. For me there is anyway, for some other people there might not be but. . .

MJ: Can you explain what you mean? Do you mean that you feel closer to God?

AP: I don't know if it's God, it's probably more nature than anything else. I don't necessarily think it's a God thing. When you're hanging on the west face of Devil's Tower and your watching the sun go down and you've climbed ten pitches that day or whatever, or maybe you haven't even been out -- you've just gone out for the evening and you're climbing a pitch and you look around and it's so beautiful and so wonderfully fantastic that you feel sort of at times you feel at unity with nature and it's not necessarily mental. Mental capacity is being able to see and make quick decisions and put your foot where it's supposed to be and physically coordinate that activity and your brain, but that spiritual part of it is when you tingle all over just from the sheer beauty of the cliffs or where you are located in that beauty --

MJ: Can you get that feeling in any sport knowing that you're making the right step, doing the right thing?

AP: I think running is similar. You can get that when you're running sometimes. I get that around here when I'm running in the meadows in the early morning and you're really fit and strong and you feel unified. It's really hard to describe it. You know the feeling that you get, but it's not academic or really a physical. It goes beyond that.

MJ: Is it euphoria?

AP: Yeah, I guess that would be a good way to describe it. You can't just say that its being related to God or whatever. It's a oneness with the planet or whatever nature is.

MJ: You don't feel out of place then at that point in time.

AP: No, you feel like you belong there. You feel a harmony or unified.

MJ: Do you ever feel a presence out there, a spiritual presence, a Godhead or a spiritual being?

AP: I feel an overwhelming presence of just nature. I don't look at it as being one single thing -- it's a combination of everything combined together. The way it should be I guess, I don't know. It's very hard to describe. Yeah, there's presence there and there's a power on the west face of Devil's Tower. It's there! You can ask a lot of climbers, and all it is is tuning into it. You know, people know, when you're there it's an amazing place.

MJ: Do you think the Indians felt this way. It's a spiritual thing for them. The Tower had sacred significance to them.

AP: Yeah, I'm sure they had some sort of similar feeling towards the place, but I don't know if it's exactly the same. I would imagine it's along similar lines. I don't really know that much about the Sioux Indians. I've talked to them a little bit about their sun dances and their spiritual ceremonies, but I don't really know exactly. I would imagine that they are attracted to it for similar reasons.

MJ: Do you get this feeling elsewhere?

AP: Oh yeah. You can get the feeling. I never get it in cities, but I guess it doesn't mean that that's not possible.

MJ: If you were climbing the World Trade Center you might?

AP: Well it's not necessarily correlated to strictly climbing. Sometimes I'll get it just being around, not climbing or anything, just out on a walk or a run -- just the simpleness of the whole system that I don't know -- you'll be just walking around and saying, this is all I really need, I don't need anything else and gee, isn't this nice. This is all here, no one built it, it's all here and this is it.

MJ: Do you think that you've attuned yourself to that or is this a gift? Do other people have this?

AP: It's like is it a neurosis, or whether it actually, it actually exists -- it's purely speculative. No one really knows. In my mind it doesn't really matter. I've entertained the thought a lot. Whether you actually know whether you're truly happy or whether you're being completely neurotic and creating it all in your mind. You're not going to know that ever as far as I'm concerned. That's basically what I've decided.

MJ: Maybe -- do you believe in an afterlife?

AP: No, not really. Not at this point. I don't believe in any afterlife at all. I don't like to speculate about the future. My ideal situation is being completely in one single moment where you are and accepting everything you have for that moment and not speculating on the future and whether you're going to be somewhere else. I mean, it's nice it's helpful to plan for the future, and we all have to do that, but being truly happy and being the happiest seems like living you know. If you do that when you're climbing you're climbing becomes much more powerful but also at that same moment you're entertaining an open-mindedness that allows you to see what is ahead and what's available at any one given time.

MJ: Chemically, is it partly due to adrenaline?

AP: Oh yeah, it's partly the endorphin thing and all that. It's probably an adrenaline rush, no doubt.

MJ: Do you get - Can you give me an example of when you were really with adrenaline or when you got this rush if that's what it was?

AP: Well, a lot of times it's probably a controlled adrenaline I guess. I'm not really up on biochemistry that much, but sometimes when you're out of control and you get an adrenaline power rush you do stupid things. You'll run it out past your last piece of equipment too far, or you'll take a risk that you really shouldn't be taking under your state of mind and in that sense the adrenaline rush is not controlled but there is adrenaline, I don't know if it's adrenaline or endorphins or whatever, those all mixed together or what, like I said I'm not into the biochemistry, but it's when your body is so physically well in tune and you're mentally really there too as well, and also spiritually as far as I'm concerned and you just feel overwhelmingly powerful it's almost as if there's nothing you can't do because you're entertaining trying anything. You can see a possibility of doing it, or at least a way to try something. Whether you're going to make it or not, that's the next step down the line. You don't think about failing when you're trying to succeed. You just do it. So, I don't know exactly how to answer your question on that.

MJ: Is the ultimate the control, the power? See I think everybody is attracted to something very much. If it's sex, if it's money, if it's power, if it's fame, I don't know what. So with you, would it be fair to say it would be to be in control, perfect and complete control, as something that you seek?

AP: Nah, I don't really think of that, because at the same time just the direct reflection of my life doesn't reflect that because on one hand I want to be in control of what I have, like physically strong and mentally and spiritually strong if possible all at the same time. On the other hand, if I was trying to really be in control in my society I would probably have a normal job, I'd probably be pulling down 50 grand a year or more, I'd probably be doing that number. That would seem to me to be more in control and have more power as far as that's concerned but not in a natural state of things. It's not really exercising power and control, even though I think that people do that, but the main is to just experiment with your state and your form and your physical body and mental aspects just so that -- it's really hard to describe. You just keep pushing yourself into more and more situations and it's more and more difficult and demand more of you all the time.

MJ: So you're finding out about yourself.

AP: Yeah, it's more of a discovery kind of deal which the more you learn about yourself, the better person you're going to be in the world the way I see it. Maybe the worst person. For me, the more I know about myself makes me a happier person. It sounds like an education -- learning about yourself and what you can do. I don't like to use the word can't that much. I think it's a terrible word. It's just like not what you can't do, but the things you can try to do and whatever medium you're in, whether it's climbing or I s'pose people have thought about it a lot better who are heavily into working or you know being entrepreneurs or whatever, probably have similar ideas about the way things kind of go when they're making millions of dollars or whatever.

MJ: You're not interested in making money?

AP: Not a lot of money. It's nice to have money to survive cause I've done when you don't have anything to eat and you want a place to stay and it's 20 degrees below or zero and you're living in your car, but when you're living at Devil's Tower and it's perfectly beautiful out in the summertime, who wants to be indoors? So it goes both ways.

MJ: Who influenced you? You said your Dad was into his RV instead of using his body and pushing his body to the ultimate. Was there anybody around who influenced you? That caused you to get into rock climbing?

AP: Oh, yeah, I had some friends who were highly involved in rock climbing when I was younger, and they helped me out a lot as far as getting into the sport, so that was a really a good deal for me.

MJ: Where they the same age as you?

AP: Oh no, they were older, probably 15 when I was about 10.

MJ: And that's where you learned?

AP: Well, yeah, I sort of learned some things from them, and I taught myself a lot, which is very slow. You don't learn as much as quickly as other people can show you. Well hey, you can do this. You can be pushed harder by someone who has more excellence or a better view. It's kind of hard to describe.

MJ: Are you competitive?

AP: Yeah. I'm highly competitive. Not just with myself, but sometimes with other people. Probably more with myself than anything else.

MJ: Where do you get that?

AP: I think it derives from society. It comes from my parents, but I think it's a direct reflection of our society. Capitalism and just the way everything works. It's like you basically have to compete to survive. In such a sense that if you want that job, you have to have the best resume; if you want that A in the classroom and you're grading on the curve, you have to beat your buddy. You deal with that - I don't think it takes that long - by the time you're ten years old you're pretty much into that frame of mind. I think people say, "Oh, I'm not competitive." Sometimes I think they need to take a little bit better look at it, because just like you, they're just given up or I believe sometimes there are people who are not competitive, but, I don't know.

MJ: You chose to do something competitive that's away from people, right?

AP: Um, yeah, there's a whole society of climbers. There are certain routes that are real hard which are test pieces. People go around and they try to see how fast they can climb it, or if they can do it on their first try. There's the whole aspect putting climbs that no one else can do because they are so hard or so scary. There like these test pieces. Then you get approval from your own society of ? (**sicafans**) or whatever you want to call them. People who are highly involved in it.

MJ: So what was your test piece?

AP: I don't know -- I don't really have any anymore.

MJ: You've done it all!?

AP: Oh, no! I have lots of routes that I want to do and climbs that I want to do. The way I see it now, it's more the refinement of moves than any single piece of climbing or peak or route or whatever; it's more refinement of the process which is involved in climbing -- the actual sort of physical movement sort of along the lines of TiChi or martial arts or running can be the same -- smoothing out your stride or form.

MJ: Do you think most rock climbers feel the way you do about it -- Gthat that's fun?

AP: Oh, yeah, it's an increasing school that way. Not so much get to the top mentality as though it's do the moves right and that'll all come together in the end. You'll get to the end if you can do the climb.

MJ: Go back just a minute and tell me about some of your early climbs. Does one of the early climbs stand out in your memory as "Boy, this is really cool."

AP: Oh, yeah. There are some big walls and things in Yosemite and some really hard free routes that people have done that day that you feel really good about "Oh yeah, I did that route or this or that route", and you go out and put up some really hard climbs and say "Well, yeah, I have this really hard route that I've done." Nowadays they don't mean as much to me.

MJ: There's nothing left to conquer in terms of the technical aspects or the piece itself? There's no worlds to conquer -- you've done everything?

AP: No, no. There's lots of big peaks and big mountains and difficult routes. I by no means calling it the highest standards there are now, but I just think it's a dead end for me. I just think I have to be climbing this, that or the other route or I have to be climbing that peak or I don't know, it's kind of hard to describe. I'd just rather be where I am climbing and doing the movement thing, just trying to perfect and refine that, then if I actually get out, I still have routes I'm working on Devil's Tower for years that I would like to do, and I'll do them when the time comes, if I do them at all.

MJ: What about Devil's Tower as a place to climb? Can you describe what it's like -- how tough it is? You said before we went on tape that this is like the ultimate climb, but I can't remember what you said, but you were really enamored of Devil's Tower.

AP: It's one of the best crack climbing areas in the world, bar none. There's just -- for the number of climbs in a given area, in all the areas I've climbed in the United States, there's not any that are any better certainly than Devil's Tower. The type of climbing that is here is not the most severe grade by any means, but there are some very hard routes here, and definitely some very hard routes still to be put up, people want to do them. Just the pureness of line and the expanse of the rock and length of pitches and the setting in which the tower is located, here by the Belle Fourche River and in the Black Hills basically.

MJ: This is coming from a person who has been all over. Tell me about some of the places you've been.

AP: I've climbed all over in the Western United States from Joshua Tree to Yosemite to and Red Rocks, Black Canyon, the Needles in South Dakota, Fremont Canyon, the front range in Colorado, climbed in the Northwest and guided in the Northwest for a few years.

MJ: What about out of the country?

AP: I think the Western United States has the best rock climbing in the world. The geology is lent itself to large expanses of outcropping.

MJ: But you say that not having visited other places?

AP: No, I've been to Australia, New Zealand and the Himalayas. I haven't been to Europe, but I just know from talking to other people who have climbed in Europe and then traveled here that there is a lot more, at least crack climbing here than in Europe. They have some really good limestone face climbing there.

MJ: So you choose to live here because of Devil's Tower?

AP: No, because of the climbing here basically.

MJ: How are you making a living?

AP: Guiding and resoling climbing shoes occasionally and doing odds and ends, but mostly guiding. I can guide people to the top of the tower and teach climbing lessons.

MJ: This is for the sake of history, because somebody's going to want to know this, but, and I'm curious too, what would you charge to take people up as a guide -- up the tower?

AP: For one single day, for one person, it's \$180. That's for a whole day of private guiding.

MJ: Do you require that they know how to climb, or prove that they know how to climb.

AP: I have ways of talking to people to find out what they know. You need the basic skills to climb Devil's Tower. You need to be able to belay and understand the rope management techniques that are involved in that, you need the basic knots, and you need to know how to rappel to get back down and have the technical ability of around 5.6 to be able to climb it.

MJ: On a scale of...

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AP: Between 5.0 and 5.14, so it's like in the middle.

MJ: Are you able to survive at that kind of pay. Survive, live, pay your rent. . .?

AP: Yeah, I'm to the point now where I can pretty much sustain my life through the course of the year doing that.

MJ: Just with your work here during the summer?

AP: Oh, no, no, not in a summer, I guide all year round. Basically through the 9-month season, starting in March or late Feb., through October, into November, sometimes if it's the beginning of December and then it's ski touring, ski mountaineering and ice climbing in the wintertime.

MJ: Whereabouts?

AP: In southwestern Colorado. Mackifer, outdoor sports, like that.

MJ: How are you regarded in the rock climbing world. Are you highly regarded, well known, unknown?

AP: Um, well in the western United States where I've been, I'm pretty well known, but my main areas are -- Devil's Tower is one for sure and in southwestern Colorado -- I've done a lot of climbing there and I'm pretty well known throughout that area.

MJ: When did you start climbing seriously -- when you were in high school?

AP: I started climbing very seriously when I was probably 10-11 years old, so I've been climbing for a long time.

MJ: Wow, that's longer than a lot of people. Isn't it something people usually get into a little later?

AP: Normally, but I was climbing on the tower the other day and there was a boy who was eight, and there's been the youngest I think was seven who climbed the tower.

MJ: Do you know about the fellow who parachuted up there?

AP: No, not anymore than what I've read about him.

MJ: What was his name Ivan? Hopkins?

AP: Yeah, George Hopkins.

Ivan: My Dad can tell you a lot about him. (He knew the guy) that brought his booze.

MJ: Oh, did he. I talked to Clyde Ice about him.



AP: Yeah, he's a character.

Ivan: Oh, you went and did Clyde Ice.

MJ: Yeah, I talked to Clyde Ice. He has a book -- he is a book. Clyde Ice, Pioneer Aviator. Do you know about him?

AP: I've met him, yeah.

MJ: Isn't he something.

AP: Yeah, he's pretty funny.

MJ: He taught himself how to fly. I could tell you some things later, but. Oh, I was going to ask you, did you ever have any accidents?

AP: I've never had any serious accidents, no.

MJ: Nothing that taught you---

AP: I've hit the ground a few times. A few stitches and mangled my ankles and that kind of thing but I've never been seriously hospitalized or anything like that.

MJ: So you are going to make sure that doesn't happen. You're pretty intense.

AP: Oh, yeah, I'm definitely safety minded, especially when I'm responsible for other people. I can take calculated risks for myself, but...

MJ: Have you done that -- taken calculated risks?

AP: Oh yeah, all climbers usually do. Just the act of climbing is taking a calculated risk. You just decide whether you want to climb or not and if that's in your criteria for being safe, then you do it. It's just like driving a vehicle. There's people who are afraid to get in a car and actually driving is quite a bit more unsafe than rock climbing, but people don't really understand that.

MJ: Do you do -- what do you call when you're unattached to ropes?

AP: Free solo climbing. I do a small amount of it, not high grade, but I do a little bit of it.

MJ: Is this place in South Dakota, the Needles, the place that has an under/over hang? It's over a highway through the Black Hills and there's some famous climber, I was told, that climbed under this without any ropes or technical equipment. Do you know who I'm talking about?

AP: No, nothing comes to my mind.

MJ: This guy who works for us, Gary Thorson, who worked in the Grand Teton National park on the rescue team, and he told us about this fellow who had an international reputation. Anyway, it's not important. Have you climbed in the Himalayas.

AP: Just a small amount, nothing serious, nothing very big.

MJ: Are you interested in attacking things like Everest?

AP: No, not at this point. I know quite a few people who have been over there and climbed over there. I have quite a few mixed feelings about people's involvement in third world countries on the basis of changing their economies and basically that whole area has become disastrous as a result of tourism, exploitation essentially by people's

desire to go there and do trips that are really wild and exotic when there wasn't enough management installed early enough to deal with the sort of impacts over there -- massive deforestation and their water and stuff was always pretty much contaminated, but deforestation and problems with erosion and that....

MJ: So not enough has been put back into track--not enough has been done to improve the situation. They just take out.

AP: Yeah, they change the nature of the area, they change the people. It's the same everywhere in third world countries. They're going through similar processes, whether it's because of tourism or industrialization. I have a lot of mixed feelings about it.

MJ: How do you feel about the tourism around Devil's Tower?

AP: Oh, I think tourism here is fine. Tourism within one's own country -- people are traveling there is fine. In the modernized world where they basically have the comforts of the society in which they live and they're not desiring that, but in third world countries where people have incomes based relative to ours and you walk in there and you pay people who are carrying your packs in Nepal less than what you would spend on beer that day after you get done walking, it doesn't add up -- it doesn't make any sense to me. You're throwing things so far out of kilter that those people desire those comforts naturally. People want to have an easier life basically. That's why we live in houses and have everything. It gets a lot more in depth, but you can't just pass the buck and say everybody else is doing it, it doesn't matter anyway. I don't agree with that -- I definitely think that people change their own lives to a certain extent. That's the only way the problems are going to be changed eventually is by changing your own life to make the difference. Whether you see it in your lifetime or not is another question.

MJ: Have you tried to change yours?

AP: My lifestyle is radically different than most everyone's. I live on probably about 1/6 of what most people live on a year. My consumption is at the minimum.

MJ: Are you talking about food, gas, clothes?

AP: Um hum, um hum.

MJ: That's deliberate?

AP: I choose that, that's what I choose. I have the education and training to -- like I said, I could be making over fifty grand a year if I wanted to be, so it's choice basically.

MJ: Did you grow into that thinking?

AP: I learned it -- I don't really know what you mean, did I grow into it. Do you mean did my parents teach it to me or?

MJ: Yeah, how did you come around to this point of view?

AP: Not through my parents, that's for sure, and not through most of the leaders in our society, the educators and average citizens. I learned it from people that are generally radical that are passionate about something that is outside the realms of the normal lifestyle. They want something bad enough that they go for it and are willing to sacrifice anything. Once you learn that you can survive like that, then it's not a big worry unless you are afraid what's going to happen when you're 50 or 60 years and you don't have any money saved up in the bank. If you live your life being afraid like that. . . I mean you might die tomorrow and you might have millions in the bank, then what good is that going to do you?

MJ: Then what you're saying is that you are consciously rejecting what your parents have stood for.

AP: I don't know -- I can't say that I've completely rejected it. It's still a struggle in my mind. I deal with it all the time. It's a different way of thinking that most people don't see -- they don't entertain it. They're absolutes. If you walk

up to someone on the street and say "Well, I don't have any insurance." A lot of people just about lose it. They just look at you like "What did you say - no insurance?" Well, I can't really afford it. I would rather live the life I live and not pay \$4000 a year in insurance or whatever most people pay. It's an outrageous amount to pay if you're completely insured. And to have to have a job where you work all the time. I'm not against work. I work very hard doing what I do and it's just that you get locked into those things, like do I have to have it. They say it's a law and stuff but for certain things you have to have insurance. But is that really true? You can go for it. If you get caught they might throw you in jail or whatever.

MJ: Yeah, and if somebody falls while you're guiding them and they sue you, you're sued.

AP: Yeah, you could be sued, but if you don't have anything . . .

MJ: You're protected by the fact that you don't have anything.

AP: Yeah, essentially.

MJ: Come, get my pick axe.

AP: But basically it's that concept of living your life in fear. Those are the kinds of things that come out of climbing once you do it for a long time. Those are the sorts of lessons that you constantly deal with everyday. You teach yourself - I'm afraid to go up there and climb that. It's not whether you're going to make it or not, it's not whether you're going to die or not. . .

MJ: What happens though when you look down the line? You're 31, and look to 42. You lose your coordination, your stamina and you miss, you fall, you break three or four bones, you're in the hospital. You gotta have bones set, things go wrong and you've got \$30-40,000 in medical bills, then what?

AP: I don't know, I mean, it's a good point, but what if that doesn't happen? What's the probability? Are you saying that the probability is that that will happen?

MJ: I'm saying that you're in the prime of life. You can afford to feel that way. When you get over the prime---

AP: But you don't have over the prime -- you're speculating in the future. You're buying into the speculation that you're going to live that long to start with, which is one of the biggest sellers in the U.S. That's why people buy into the fact that they're actually going to be at some point down the road what they have -- they have absolutely no clue. It's just like this thundershower that came through last night. If you were betting on whether or not it was going to rain. I was setting around the KOA this morning and we were talking. Well I didn't think it was going to rain last night. That's what I said. You talk to someone else and I go "God, Dan sure thought it was going to rain." You get a million different opinions on what's going to happen in the future. You're speculating completely. So you can always take that aspect that well, yeah, shit, what if, I've got to cover all my bases so that means I have to get a job now, and I have to forgo what I really would like to do with my life, or how I would like to spend my time exactly at this moment, like I talked to you before. You have to be conscious of those decisions in your life. If you are aware of what you're doing every single moment that's kind of the struggle to attain that sort of a state, mental, physical and spiritual state, where you are. That's what climbing kind of teaches you as far as I can tell. It teaches you that awareness cause it pushes you to that state. If you're constantly out there your body and your mind and your spirit are screaming at you all the time, you're going to hear it. It's just like if you go to a calculus class, if you're listening, you're hearing, breathing and doing calculus all the time and you're probably going to learn it. These are really gray areas. I'm saying that you're speculating on something that doesn't really exist. You're speculating on a lifestyle that's been created in the American dream and the American mind. That you are going to live to be 60, 70 or 80 years or whatever. How do you even know that when you get to be 40 that you're not even going to want to commit suicide and forget the whole thing because you don't even want to be on the planet anymore because it's so polluted or you don't have any drinking water, or there are so many people here or for any other reason. That's another option that people don't consider very often either, whether it's through religious concerns or just people don't consider that they choose to be alive everyday. They choose to get up and get out of bed in the morning. You're not stuck, it's your choice, and you're here -- do with it what you want or what you can. We as Americans have an amazing life. It's incredible the things we can do and experience. To retrovert and say, "What if you were starving to death or what if you didn't have any money?"

You can't speculate because you're not in that situation because you can only think about what you'd do. I probably wouldn't be climbing. . .

MJ: In the time continuum, past, present and future, you sort of just hacked off the two ends of the spectrum and you're just living for the moment -- the moment of unification.

AP: The past is there, but what can you do with it exactly? You can't relive it. You can't go back and say, well I'd like to do that again. I'd like to do that better or I'd like to do that different. I wouldn't have done it period.

MJ: No, that's out of my realm completely. Some people say you can learn from the past, I don't think you can learn from the past. I think you can learn from the past if you want to learn from the past. I think most people don't use the past. But I don't think utilization of the past is important. I think it's as aesthetic sense. If you go into the visitors center and you find out about this Hopkins who climbed Devil's Tower and other people who climbed and failed and climbed and succeeded and you traced the history of it, to you is it a fascinating thing?

AP: Yeah, I think it's interesting. The struggle of human nature. I don't know what it is. You can learn from it and be inspired, if nothing else. It can teach you what other peoples potentials were or what ...and that gives you some greater insight into what your potential might be

MJ: But do you see what I'm saying? I'm getting away from the utilization thing. What I'm saying, Andy, is that I think I am able to enjoy life more because I'm part of a time continuum that I recognize as a continuum. Two seconds ago we were talking about something else. That's in the past -- that's now history. But I don't compartmentalize like that. I feel that what I am is in this broad sort of ethereal spectrum and I'm part of it. It's an ongoing thing. I don't project into the future too much except for the traditional reasons like most people buy insurance for the future -- they buy a car and a house for that future protection and that need.

AP: Yeah, but that directly impacts your daily life as to how you're going to live because nowadays in the society in which we live the number of hours that you work a day, your insurance and those things are so expensive that it governs what you're doing now. You're basically, and I don't like to say it, but people very often become slave to their labors. They are not in control of their lives. They are enslaved to what they think they may need. I think you can probably understand that.

MJ: Oh, I can understand it.

AP: If it's your conscious choice, if you really believe---I'd really like to have health insurance to tell you the truth, but at this point I'm not willing to sacrifice my lifestyle to get it. If I could get health insurance doing what I'm doing, then I will probably get it sometime in the future.

MJ: Alright, how much have you created your own lifestyle, vis-a-vis become a product of someone else's lifestyle. How much have you really created yourself? I mean, you're wearing shorts, you're wearing shoes and a tee shirt. You're wearing a watch, you know, I mean you have to eat. You have to go down here to the visitors center. You have to work with Ogden to get a little job done today. You know, to what extent can you have that control that you're seeking.

AP: I climb everyday if I want to. It's just a choice. I don't have to do this work that I'm actually going today. I could go climbing if I wanted to. It's my choice as to when I do my work or not.

MJ: Are you tied to a schedule?

AP: Not really. Not other than for any other reason than I find schedules to be valuable for increasing your performance basically. If you'd say I'm going to run, I'd like to get on this running thing so I can get more aerobically fit, well, you know, if you kind of have a seed in your mind as to how much you want to increase your performance and you get an idea of how many miles a day you need to be running or what you would like to see yourself at down the road, I'm not saying that the future doesn't necessarily exist at all, but the difference between what I'm saying is that when you start speculating on a life that's going to be twenty or thirty years down the road you don't have any idea.

MJ: Are you married?

AP: No, not married.

MJ: Do you speculate that you'll be married?

AP: The only reason that I see myself getting married would just be if I had the kind of relationship with somebody that made my life more enriched, more fulfilling or taught me something more about myself. . .

MJ: This lady that you talked about was your partner? Do you live with her?

AP: Do I live with her? Oh, yeah, I live with her. She's in Yosemite now as a park ranger, so she has a different job this summer.

MJ: So she's not a wife, but you and her live together.

AP: Yeah, we live together.

MJ: Things have really changed. I can see where I fit in time. Just talking to you, I can see a reflection of myself. I know where I fit in time pretty well but sometimes it's nice to talk to a person like you because sometimes I get wakened up to find out that maybe I have gotten into a rut a little too much.

AP: What I try to do is try to get things into perspective and just try to look at it as if it's not a rut necessarily. It's just a different way of life. That's the thing that I keep refining constantly and really in my life is being aware of my choices and dealing with my stuff and not trying to deal with anyone else's necessarily except for having conversations like we're having here. You know, I'm not trying to tell you how to live your life and I'm not saying that because you have health insurance you're a real idiot. You know, you could be out taking photographs with all that money you're spending on health insurance. I'm not trying to say that to you at all, I'm just -- it's just that my view--that's what I'm trying to get to. I don't even think about that when I'm talking to you that, none of those thoughts, which I could, in order to make myself feel better, but I don't feel insecure about my lifestyle. I realize that -- I think you understand that's something that I've had to work with because five or six years ago I might have thought you're a weird person because you have health insurance and I'd have to think that way to verify my state.

MJ: I like your point of view, but I'm curious. How do you deal with the contingencies -- when you walk into the snack shack to buy a twinkie -- you wouldn't buy a twinkie -- you'd buy a piece of fruit and something to drink -- if somebody comes and tries maybe to steal your wallet. Somebody has a heart attack -- there's an accident outside -- two good looking ladies sit down and want to talk with you -- what I'm saying is how do you deal with the contingencies? Life is never predictable.

AP: No. I don't understand why...

MJ: How do you deal with the moment, I mean it's like you're saying, "I can control what I do, and I have enough of a problem controlling myself."

AP: I think we're talking about different things at this point and what I was trying to say before is that I try not to pass any sort of judgment on anyone else's case. This other thing, as far as dealing with contingencies, just our interactions today is a perfect example. I walked into the KOA and you guys were just setting there, I'm kind of busy, you know, trying to do some work trying to make some money so I can buy that piece of fruit or whatever -- I have to do that too. Everyone in the society is basically a hypocrite one way or the other. We all consume, we all do things that are bad like driving vehicles around, but what do you do. That's sort of the dilemma, but to get back on track is like -- I talked to you this morning and wanted to sit down and hear what you had to say just because I found it interesting -- you're writing this book, working on this project and basically I like to maintain open-mindedness about something and I like to work with people as a general rule. I don't know if that's what you're after.

MJ: That's exactly what I mean. I didn't think you were trying to pass judgment on my lifestyle. I'm learning from you. But the thing I got to thinking was that if you're trying so hard to -- if you're so intense on creating your own moment...

AP: It becomes a selfish thing.

MJ: Not selfish -- I don't want to use that word. As a matter of course the way the atoms are flying around within the molecule, life is nothing but contingencies and how can you...

AP: The randomness is amazing.

MJ: How do you control for the moment when the moment is so arbitrary?

AP: Defining the moment is what you have to get down to. The definition of the moment, and you say a moment is a finite period of time, exactly how finite is that period of time. We as humans, what do you define as a moment. Is it the process of a decision? Is it like when your mind moves, or is it when I'm fidgeting with my hands at this time? Is it when my mind decides to move my hand a certain way? Is that a moment? Or does a moment occur before that. Exactly where is that. When you start talking in a moment, that's like talking a hundred years or a thousand years in geological time, and you're talking something that you can't really understand. That's really one of the amazing things about rock climbing that if there's anything I can teach anybody at the same time it's that you learn from rock climbing is that you're there in the moment -- you're right at your physician, mental and spiritual limit trying to do something that requires an amazing amount of concentration and focus and desire to do it. At the same time that you're doing that you have to have this incredible amount of open-mindedness to see what's around you, you know, especially if you have never done the climb even before which there are different aspects of rock climbing and mountaineering which are all the same that. . .oh. . .that well, in this particular instance which is like the purest form would be like climbing a climb, a route that was very, very difficult. . .that. . .you've never seen or climbed on even before, well in the given patch of that route there are a certain number of holds there you may know, oh, it's really hard to describe how many you know, but there are different ways in which to use your body in opposition or on counteracting torques and just to hold yourself basically on the wall and if you miss a crucial hold at a really hard part you know, you may have made that section so hard that you've wasted enough energy that when you get to the next hard section, you know you won't be able to do it because you've wasted so much energy or. . .see what I'm saying? You have to be so incredibly focused actually, physically do the move, but then again at the same time you're entertaining this mind. . .this. . .ok, you're entertaining this thought in the back of your mind that "Have I seen all the holds? Have I seen all the holds? Are they all here? Am I using everything the right way? WAIT! Did I look down there?" You know, it's like at that very same time that you're hanging on, pulling constantly and using yourself physically to actually hold on and clamp to the wall--your mind is reeling you know, with this, you know, looking for some easier way to do the route or looking for all the holds or visualizing your body in you know, different positions and things and thinking, "Well, can I do it that way? Can I do it that way?" and oh, I don't know if you understand that.

MJ: I think I do.

AP: It's outrageous -- it's an amazing -- and when we actually succeed you know it's like WOW! It's, it's really incredible here just like when you're at that limit you know, like you know it's what's so funny, you're like telling yourself "I don't think I can do this", but you know in the back of your mind that that is just total baloney--that you're never going to be able to do it if that is what you're thinking, if you're thinking, "I'm not going to be able to do it," you actually believe that, you're not. So you have to think, "This is really hard, I know this is really, really hard and I might not be able to do it, but wait, I think I can try it, you know the whole concept of a try is like the most important lesson that I can try it," you know. Why do I care if I succeed or not at this point, I'm not even worried about that.

MJ: Because, because in trying it you're--it's, it's maybe it has something to do with actually being, your being and it's a recognition of being.

AP: Umhum, yeah, it's just, I guess it's like by trying it you're, you're yeah, you're there -- you know you. . .I don't know, it's kind. . .you know, it's, it's all you can do because like it goes back to the time continuum that we have been talking about. You can't succeed if you haven't succeeded already. Ok. So you want to succeed

essentially you know whether you learn that society or whatever you decide you have to succeed or exactly what creates that desire to succeed or maybe it's just the desire to experience that particular move or that particular moment.

MJ: Yeah, I was going to say, maybe, maybe you would have to find out what it is, maybe you'd have to attack it from the other end. "OK, when I get there what am I gonna have?"

AP: Right.

MJ: I am happy seeing and this is where I go wrong a lot too, to tell you the truth. I don't know why I'm putting all this on tape, but where I go wrong is sometimes I look at something and I say, "How will somebody else think when I get this done? How will they appreciate it or enjoy it? How will the most severe critic, what will the most severe think of this picture when I do it?" And how would most people enjoy this? And I realize that that's not where it's at, I realize then that I'm not really in control of myself, that there is some other thing there that's driving me that is not as true or as honest or you know, important, let's put it that way.

AP: That's really interesting, because that happens in climbing too. It goes back to that same thing I was saying . . . it's like if you do that really hard route that you know, only one climber in the world's done or whatever, then you can say -- hey, everyone's going to think or whatever, you know. But I know what you mean, but at the same time you're using the standards of other great people, you know, in your field to -- to push yourself.

MJ: Otherwise if you're on a route that nobody else had climbed and you were doing a technique nobody else had used and you were completely out on the ether somewhere you'd have no standard to measure your success by almost.

AP: Yeah, right.

MJ: It's like you would do it and it might be the most difficult thing anybody ever did on a mountain or a rock, but you wouldn't feel the elation because you don't have anything to gauge it by. You know what I'm saying?

AP: Oh, yeah, in the end it's you. I understand what you're saying which pulls this whole, you know, the whole argument back down to that you are connected to it -- to a group or society of standards or you know, whatever you want to call it.

MJ: But there's nothing like that adrenaline rush is there?

AP: Yeah.

MJ: Nothing like it, I've heard people talk. Motor sports, you know, I listen to a guy who's at the races -- motorcycles or he's in his 50's -- he's about 55. He raced motorcycles and he doesn't do much anymore, but he still races snowmobiles. And he was going down on the trail that had been marked with little flags at 30 mph and 25 mph. They'd marked the route. And when they got to one point where they wanted them to slow down or take knowledge of the fact that there was a road, they plunked another flag down. Anyhow, the upshot of this was that he was traveling this at 110 mph in a race, and he told me that he went over this highway, over this embankment, over the highway and he was in the air, and he knew just before he got to this point, the lip where he had to really do something, to make up his mind, there was only one thing to do and that is, if you're in doubt, give it gas. He gave it gas and he said he was up in the air, then he said, "You know Mark, it was like time stood still. I was up in the air for a split second, I was in complete control, I could see everything around, I knew what I was doing. It was like I could do anything I wanted to at that time. Everything slowed down." Pure adrenaline. He made it to the other side, barely. He barely made it. But he said it's those kind of things that you live for in the sport. You get addicted to adrenaline and you live for it. It gets tougher and tougher as you get older because it's harder to get, you know, when you're at your prime adrenaline rushes must come easier because you're in better shape and you're able to manipulate the adrenaline or something, but as you get older you're not able to do that. But he said that's like an orgasm -- it's incredible and you live for it. I don't know if there's anything similar in climbing, but I take it by what you've said, there must be.

AP: Yeah, it's sort of paralleled -- probably along those lines. I'm not completely certain.

MJ: But you've felt it anyway -- that oneness you were talking about.

AP: Oh, yeah.

MJ: I was going to ask you a little bit about Devil's Tower, and then I know you've got to get going and do other things. But Devil's Tower has all sorts of -- the Indian's consider it sacred. Mateo teepee or whatever...

AP: They are lots of different tribes apparently - I'm not sure of all of them.

MJ: The movie -- did the movie *Strange Encounters of the Third Kind* have much to do with this perception of what this mountain is about, or did it increase the popularity?

AP: I think it increased the popularity. If you talk to visitors and ask them what their perception of the Tower is, they'll tell you that they've seen it in that movie, or something along those lines. Generally, but not always.

MJ: Does that bother you?

AP: No, not necessarily, it doesn't really.

MJ: It doesn't matter why they come here.

AP: No, I just -- it doesn't really bother whether they saw it in a movie or exactly what.

MJ: How long are you going to be at this?

AP: Oh, I don't know.

MJ: Do you call it a sport?

AP: Yeah, it's a sport.

MJ: You don't know how long you're going to be at the sport?

AP: Oh, I don't know, hopefully forever but, as long as I live. I don't know -- it's really hard to tell. You just never know -- I might want to be something completely different tomorrow.

MJ: Well, there we are, speculating into the future again. But I'm just curious. Do you ever give way to speculating that when your 75 years old, this or this is going to happen to me, or I'll still be climbing?

AP: No -- I don't even try to think about it that much. Outside the natural occurrence of getting older basically you deal with diminishing physical ability but I know a lot of people who are climbing in their late 50's who are very good climbers - climb very strong.

MJ: Do you know Paul Petsalt? Is he still climbing?

AP: Yeah

MJ: Is he? The old man of the mountain. He's a feisty guy.

AP: Yeah, there's a lot of people that can still enjoy it -- the activity---

MJ: Well, you don't give way to those kind of speculations, I know, but it would be sort of interesting how you envision yourself. Your degree was in geophysical engineering. Did you just decide after you got that degree that you were just not going to go into that field?

AP: I worked in my field for awhile. I worked in Alaska quite a bit, and looking for oil and gas essentially.



MJ: How long were you in that?

AP: I worked there for a little over a year.

MJ: You were in your field for only a year? What caused you to get out?

AP: I just didn't like it. I didn't like being told where I was going to live for my job to start with. That was one thing. When I got ready to graduate the industry was getting pretty grim and they were pulling all the jobs in the nice places like Anchorage and Denver and if you want to call those nice places, and people were getting shipped off to third world countries and living in those areas which aren't at all interesting to me as far as living my life -- I just don't want to live there. I've traveled in some third world countries, and I have friends who've gotten malaria and all that kind of crap doing that sort of thing in the field. Once you start as a geophysicist that's what you do -- like in any other type of discipline, you do a lot of field work and stuff.

MJ: What company were you with?

AP: I worked for a geophysical company called EdCon and we subcontracted to all the large oil companies.

MJ: Were you getting the idea as you worked toward your degree, Andy, that maybe this was not for you, or did it take that one year to make you decide that it wasn't for you?

AP: I think it kind of gradually happened. I enjoyed the science -- I love math and physics and all that -- it's just the lifestyle. I don't want to have a regular job in Denver or Houston or whatever. Being in the rat-race for 40 hours a week or more.

MJ: Do you know John Perry Barlow? He's a rancher in Pinedale and wrote songs for The Grateful Dead. He got into an environmentalist movement. I don't think he'd be upset if I told you, because it's common knowledge. He was a ranch kid for 17 1/2 years

Other: I read his story -- in the *Rolling Stone*. It was good. It was about a ten page article and it was dang good. Writing songs - it was on all the stuff, he's quite a...He wrote songs for the Grateful Dead -

MJ: Was that a recent *Rolling Stone*?

Other: I don't know, I saw it in a Dr.'s office or something. It was in something I read.

MJ: Well, anyway, he was not in control of the ranch at all. The ranch was going down the tubes and after 17 1/2 years of living on a ranch he'd had enough, and I guess the family had had enough -- they had to sell the ranch. He wasn't in control. So he got into what they call virtual reality, where you've got these goggles or optical devices on your eyes that project images -- they're super computers connected to your eyepieces and images are projected in three dimensions, and through a series of cords electrical or electronic attachments to a power glove, you can actually control this glove in three dimensional space. So you can control your environment. I thought it was sort of interesting, we were talking about control and controlling your environment. I think one of the reasons he got into this at all was that he was fascinated by the fact that you could control your environment. He was in an uncontrollable situation where there was nothing he could do to save the ranch. The ranch was going down the tubes, but here was a field he could get into where he could exercise some control actually projecting himself into a kitchen and with the power glove, work the hand into the position, turn the water on and open the refrigerator door and things like that, but I don't know if in your study of geophysics you've ever come across something like that because you can establish models in three dimensions and you can, for example, get inside an atom, move protons and neutrons around in three dimensions.

AP: No, I've never heard of that. Is it some field of artificial intelligence?

MJ: Yeah, but he doesn't like to use that term, artificial intelligence and I can't tell you why. (Are we getting in your way?) Maybe if I can get a Xerox copy of the articles I'll send them to you.

AP: That would be interesting.

MJ: An article out of Berkely I think called Mondo 2000, it's a publication that deals with virtual reality and computerization and now he's working with -- he helped establish a foundation called Electronic Frontiers Foundation which is an organization to defend the hackers who are supposedly being, you know, held at gun point while their goods are gone through by the Gestapo...people who like to break into computer systems. I'll see if I can send you that sometime. Well, Andy, this has been lots of fun. I guess I never asked you about technical aspects of climbing which are not to me as significant.

AP: No, they're pretty much clear-cut -- you can learn those.

MJ: But you did mention a couple of things like **jumarring?**

AP: Jumarring -- just ascending, climbing up a rope with mechanical ascenders. You don't actually climb up with holds on the rock, you just climb up a rope. It's used a lot in rescuing and caving.

MJ: So if the rope is coming down from Devil's Tower, you just go up the rope?

AP: Yeah, you climb up, jumar up the rope, slide these clamps on the rope, they slide up, but they won't slide down so...

MJ: This I think I have to get, cause I think I'd be negligent if I didn't, but I want to ask you, first of all, what was the toughest climb you ever had?

AP: Oh, I don't know, there are so many aspects. The hardest free climb I ever had was 513, but the toughest climb was probably some big wall that I never made it up, and ran out of water and food on and things got very desperate. Dealing with people who are threatening to untie the rope and jump off and seeing things in a whole different realm. Maybe they're dehydrated and hallucinating so much that they think they're going to die anyway so it doesn't matter anyway. Trying to convince your climbing partner not to jump off the cliff and abandon you -- situations that are so desperate that you just don't have any idea...

MJ: When did this ...

AP: In the Black Canyon, climbing the Painted Wall in the Black Canyon.

MJ: What was the situation, had you gone up quite a ways?

AP: Yeah, it was one of our first big walls and we were trying to do the Painted Wall and it was in the middle of August and it was totally stupid. We only had one quart of water for a route that generally takes a couple of days or longer and we were just trying to do it real fast and we got off route. We were on the wrong climb and were in uncharted territory and we didn't know that and our water was out and it was over 105 degrees every day and we only had a quart between the two of us. Things can get really weird.

MJ: And this is like that Jim Bridger story when somebody said he was pushed into a box canyon by Indians and he elaborated on the whole story and said, "Well, here you were in this box canyon and the Indians were attacking...how did you get out?" He said, "I didn't, they killed me".

AP: Yeah, that was about how it ended up being.

MJ: How did you get out?

AP: We just had to rappel down eventually. We left almost all of our climbing gear on the wall and barely made it back down to the bottom of the canyon. There was no way we could go up. We couldn't go up anymore -- we just got stopped.

MJ: Well, you could have rappelled down anytime.

AP: Yeah, but when you're 2000, 1500 feet up on a wall that's a long ways, a lot of rappels. When there's no anchors at the pitches you have to leave all the gear. You may not actually be able to find an anchor at a given spot to keep going down. You don't always know unless you have a bolt kit, and we didn't have a bolt kit, you can't just drill a hole in a rock and put in an anchor wherever you want and go down, we had to find anchors there.

MJ: So you lucked out?

AP: Oh yeah, we were extremely lucky that we didn't either have an accident or die of exposure.

MJ: That was the toughest situation you were ever in?

AP: Oh yeah, close to it. It's just hard to say. You run into all kinds of weird situations when your doing long runs. That was pretty extreme I have to admit. That might have been the most extreme.

MJ: What was the 513 -- where was that?

AP: That's here at the Tower. I've done some at other places too, but there's one here. They're just free routes -- just gymnastic routes. It's like if you get fit enough and you work on the technique and the movement and all that sort of thing and you do the route it's very climactic but they're not as..it's just a long and different line, not the same thing.

MJ: Have you ever climbed the tower without ropes?

AP: Yeah, you can go up an easier route and just solo the route and it's well below your difficulty and its no big worry. You're probably not going to fall off if you've done it before or chances are you're not going to fall off.

MJ: How do you feel when you're not supported by any rope whatsoever and you're up how many feet?

AP: Oh, 4 or 5 hundred I guess. I feel in control, otherwise I wouldn't be doing it. I don't feel out of control when I'm doing it. I don't make it a regular habit--it's not something I practice all the time.

MJ: Do you ever get a feeling of panic going through you?

AP: Not really, you do it at a level where you have control. If you start you're going to panic, you usually go down. You don't put yourself in that situation.

MJ: You've never panicked?

AP: Oh no, I've panicked on routes, but not when I was free soloing something.

MJ: How do you control the panic?

AP: Generally, I know the climb. I don't do routes on site solo generally unless it's very, very easy. If I'm free soloing something I've usually done it before so I know where the next hold is or I know what the difficulty is or something like that.

MJ: You said something that was really interesting to me. You said, well how do you know you're not going to kill yourself at age 40. Alright, that's the same attitude that I've had at times. How do I know that I'm not going to jump off that building? Maybe I'll have that urge and I'll jump off that building. How do you know, when you're up there 3/4 of the way up the Tower, that you won't say, "Oh, the hell with it.?"

AP: I don't know. You don't. That's what's neat about life. You realize that you have that choice. You can jump off. It's just like what we were talking about before -- speculating down the future that you're not going to have enough money to retire on or you're not going to have this, that or the other material thing. Whatever it is, you also need to realize that you have a choice at that point. If your life is substandard by what you believe it is, if you're that miserable, than you can just commit suicide. You can just go jump off that cliff. It's your choice - that right.

MJ: There's also that irrational -- you've probably heard of it -- people get the urge to jump. People get on buildings and get that strange, uncontrollable urge to jump?

AP: Oh yeah, like vertigo or whatever it's called.

MJ: Is that what it is? I thought it was the fear of heights.

AP: Oh, I don't know what it is described as exactly.

MJ: But you've never had that feeling.

AP: Oh yeah, I get it sometimes. If I walk to the edge of a big cliff sometimes you feel like you want to jump off but I've never had a big problem with it.

MJ: Have you ever tried to analyze it though? I'm talking to someone who's a lot closer to it than I am, but I've experienced it and I just wondered if you'd ever thought about it.

AP: I don't know, I don't know what it is exactly. I've never entertained those thoughts of that too much -- actually jumping off.

MJ: I guess that's about it. Oh, do you have any brothers and sisters?

AP: One sister and two brothers. My sister is older and by two brothers are younger than I am.

MJ: Any special way the middle kid grows up in your family? Is your older sister responsible, the younger one spoiled?

AP: No, not too much.

MJ: What are they all doing?

AP: They all live in Grand Junction and essentially they all work for my Dad. Or with my Dad in one aspect or another.

MJ: In his business?

AP: Yeah, sort of or in one of the businesses that he has.

MJ: Why didn't you follow that route?

AP: I just can't stand the beauty industry -- it drives me insane. I hate it, I think it's disgusting.

MJ: The what industry?

AP: The beauty industry. Cosmetics -- appearance industry. It just breeds exactly what I most hate in society. Trying to make something look like something when in fact it's not. Actually what you're more interested in should be the person, not what they look like. It sort of goes into that. I just can't deal with it -- it's repulsive to me. Even though we have to -- I like to have a clean appearance and not be dirty or whatever, but I mean, if you understood the ramifications and the magnitude of that whole industry from the cosmetics to hair products, it's just amazing. There's so much money spent on it it's incredible.

MJ: What do you think about -- now, how long have you lived in Wyoming?

AP: I've been spending time here for the last five or six summers.

MJ: What do you think of Wyoming's people?

AP: I think they're great. I really like the people around here. They have a lot of style.

MJ: Do you think -- I've asked people what they think is unique about the state of. . . why the state is unique if it is unique. Do you think low population has anything to do with it?

AP: Yeah, I'm sure. This area as an example, if you had the population of So. California, would be littered with houses everywhere. The ranching industry would probably be really small in comparison with what it is now. It's already starting to happen here -- people are starting to buy land here that live in California and have summer houses here and stuff. I don't know exactly if they're still maintaining the ranches or not, but it's going to happen sooner or later. There's going to be summer homes here all over the place and the land will be subdivided and broken up and sold. But, yeah, I think the uniqueness lies in the lower population and the wide expanses of land.

MJ: What's it going to be like 100 years from now? If you could come back.

AP: Oh, I don't have any idea. Ideally I would like it to be similar, even though I understand the changes that are continually going on..it's going to happen. I think it'll be more modernized and I think eventually it will be exploited as the basic nature of man.

MJ: Barlow was saying that we have to quit taking things out of the land. We've got to quit taking oil and trona and coal out of the land and looking at Wyoming as a colony which we can exploit and take things out, which we've always done. We've got to look at it as having the potential to ease one's mind and people can appreciate the open spaces and enjoy this kind of lifestyle and at least momentarily and maybe go back to their rats nest or whatever.

AP: I think his idea is right, but I think he needs to do it at the expense of his own lifestyle and not at the expense of other countries across the world. It's fine to say lets have tourism in Colorado and lets have tourism in Wyoming and isn't it a nice soft industry, lets just go over to this third world country and get our uranium and coal and destroy those peoples lives and economy and just mess them up completely. That's what you're doing -- not just destroying the land, but also the economy. Even if they are impoverished and don't have God or whatever, you're going over there and it's out of sight, out of mind for 250 million Americans basically and you're just raping and pillaging another whole part of the world and you don't see it. That's what's happening all over the place. They want it, but they want it for no other reason that the people that are involved in the oil and coal industry want it too. They either look at it directly from the economical way or other. I think it goes back to you have to change your lifestyle, but gee lets have tourism in Wyoming, but lets quit driving and lets recycle, lets just not consume as much, cut down and change our lifestyle if we're going to make it so people ... we've got to create some other industry where recycling what we're using maybe to create the money for people to come on vacation here instead of saying lets go rape and pillage Africa of lets go rape and pillage some other third world country in South America, or you know what I mean? Those areas are very wonderful too and you're dealing with whole different societies of people that the wild and wealthy Americans are out of control.

MJ: Is there any help for us politically, is there any hope for us?

AP: Oh, I think there's always hope. People can always change. They can do something different. But exactly what'll happen when you look at the basic science of concepts of entropy, the planet can't support it biologically and there's going to be some sort of catastrophic change, people have a hard time learning from things that aren't incredibly painful, really make them change, like you actually take away their gas, they can't heat their house and they're cold, then they might not take hot showers in the summertime to save the fuel they need to heat their at a moderate level, or, who's to say, even surviving in this climate in the wintertime in Wyoming, maybe nobody should live here in the winter just because the planet can't support it. Those are purely speculative things unless you live like the Indians did.

MJ: Are you pretty much pessimistic then?

AP: No, I'm not pessimistic. I'm basically optimistic. I like to believe I'm optimistic, even though I have a lot of doubts, but I can't go around every morning thinking that the whole thing is doomed. Look up at Devil's Tower and think gee, it's nice today, may not be here 100 years from now for some other human to enjoy. I think about that quite a bit.

MJ: Do you think it will be here 100 years from now?

AP: Oh, I have no idea. My guess is yeah, it'll be here, but people might not be.

MJ: OK -- Listen, I want to thank you for your time. This has been real enlightening for me

END